

Rose Gordon Book Highlights ‘A Black Woman’s West’

The Publications Program at the Montana Historical Society is pleased to announce the imminent release of a book on Montana’s own Rose Gordon.

“A Black Woman’s West: The Life of Rose B. Gordon” was written by Michael K. Johnson. Gordon’s life was ordinary in terms of its day-to-day struggles, but extraordinary in its sum.

Born in the Barker Mining District of central Montana Territory, Rose Beatrice Gordon (1883-1968) was the daughter of an African American chef and an emancipated slave who migrated to the West in the early 1880s.

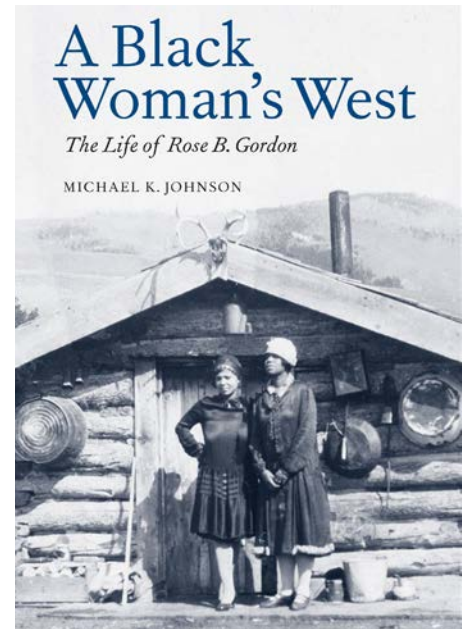
“This forthcoming book will tell the story of the Gordon family—John, Anna, Robert, Rose, John Francis Jr., George, and Taylor—and pays tribute to Rose, who lived

most of her life in White Sulphur Springs,” said Diana Di Stefano, Publications Program manager.

In her youth, Rose Gordon excelled academically and distinguished herself as a musical performer. As an adult, she established her economic independence as a restaurant owner, massage therapist, and caregiver.

She also made a place for herself in the public sphere through letters to the editor and eventually through a regular newspaper column for the “Meagher County News”—a remarkable undertaking at a time when Black women in America were largely denied a public voice.

Find the new book on our online store: <https://app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/a-black-womans-west-the-life-of-rose-b-gordon>



A “Notify Me When Available” button is on the listing for folks to sign up to receive an email when the book becomes available. 🌟

MHS Staff Preps for the Montana Heritage Center Shuffle

Moving the Montana Historical Society into its new digs won’t be easy, but with proper collaboration, a touch of creativity, and a whole lot of communication, it should go relatively smoothly.

The 66,000-square-foot addition is taking shape to the north of the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building. A substantial part of the foundation is in place, with steel erection wrapping up in April. The exterior work is on track to be completed by the end of 2022, with exhibit installation beginning

in the spring of 2023.

As that work gets under way, crews will turn to the renovation of the current Montana Historical Society galleries, offices, and store. The plan calls for work to begin in the basement to upgrade utilities starting in mid-2023. Around October 2023, the renovation work will be focused on the third floor, followed by updates to the second floor.

The main floor renovations are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2024 and wrap up in the final

quarter of that year. That work includes moving the store to its new location, expanding the Charlie Russell gallery, and creating two classrooms, along with office renovations.

While the renovations are taking place, staff on those floors may temporarily relocate their offices.

Construction officials note that a lot of unknowns might affect the progress, including poor construction weather and an inability to acquire materials in

Heritage Center Shuffle (cont. on p. 3)

Vision for Tomorrow

HISTORY ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE PAST. HISTORY ALSO IS ABOUT THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

Even as we plan for and construct a new physical home for the Montana Historical Society, we have been envisioning what the work that occurs within those walls will look like. We also have spent considerable time discussing what a twenty-first-century public history organization should look like. We have asked ourselves questions about our role and our meaning. What do we do? Why do we do it?

Out of this process a rethought mission for MHS surfaced: ***MHS saves Montana's past, shares its stories, and inspires exploration, to provide meaning for today and vision for tomorrow.***

For more than one hundred fifty years, MHS has collected and saved the diaries, letters, photographs, art, and artwork that allow us to learn about our past. We share the stories that those items tell through books, exhibits, research projects, curriculum, public programs, and so many other ways.

But simply saving the materials of our past and sharing their stories is not enough. To truly engage all generations with Montana's rich history, we must inspire exploration, which isn't easy. We are tackling that task in part by

asking our audiences—students, lifelong learners, public historians, and you, our members—what inspires them to interact with us.

We also hope to inspire exploration by encouraging active engagement with history. In developing new gallery spaces, we are designing elements that ask our visitors to consider events from Montana's past from multiple perspectives. Only by thoughtfully considering and analyzing different accounts of events can we gain as complete an understanding as possible about that past.

The most significant part of our mission builds on why exploration is important. By exploring the past through the programs of the Montana Historical Society, history provides meaning for today and vision for tomorrow. Every moment of our past has shaped our world today. We as citizens cannot fully understand the issues we face in the modern world without understanding how those issues came to be. And unless we recognize and explore the many facets of our past, it is impossible to make a fully informed decision about how to resolve today's issues.

So history is about the future. Our work to save Montana's past



and share its stories is not just about creating collections of artifacts or documenting dates and events. It is about using those items and their stories to ensure that today's citizens understand how our society came to be what it is now and to provide them with a vision for how tomorrow's society might evolve and progress.

I hope that you are inspired to explore our multilayered past by the many ways we share Montana's stories. The past provides our understanding of today and our vision for tomorrow. ✪

Successful Year-End Campaign Raises \$90,000

The Montana Historical Society just completed the most successful year-end campaign in MHS history, raising more than \$90,000. Thanks to you, our wonderful supporters, we can pack up Montana's historic artifacts and protect them for future display when the museum in the Montana Heritage Center

opens in 2024.

"We can't say 'thank you' enough," said Development Manager Ginny Sullivan. "As we jump into 2022, I want to thank each of you. Maybe you gave to our year-end campaign, attended an event in 2021, toured the museum or Original Governor's

Mansion, volunteered, purchased a book or Montana-inspired item from the store, or renewed your membership.

"Your support of MHS makes our work even more meaningful than it already is and ensures we can gather and preserve future art and artifacts. We are most humbly

Year-End Campaign (cont. on p. 3)



As the walls of the Montana Heritage Center takes shape, MHS staff, members, trustees, public historians, and life-long learners are envisioning what our work will look like inside these walls.

a timely fashion due to ongoing global shortages.

“We’ll update the staff every few months so everyone can be prepared,” said Martin Byrnes, a managing partner with Cushing Terrill Architects, which is overseeing the project. “They’ve been doing great working through the construction.”

Meanwhile, MHS staff are preparing for “The Big Move.” Since January 2020, a major inventorying and packing project of the museum’s collections has been under way in preparation for moving all museum objects into the addition. So far, the museum has inventoried and packed 42,839 objects into boxes and placed them on almost 200 pallets.

Many of those items are being stored in the existing galleries.

The northeast gallery already is shuttered, and a large part of the Homeland gallery also has been transformed into a storage area. The rest of the Homeland and Neither Empty Nor Unknown galleries, as well as the auditorium, are slated to be open until the fall of 2022.

Exhibits will continue to be open to the public in the lobby and Charlie Russell gallery until the project necessitates their closing.

The Research Center also is preparing for the move and plans to close the reading room to the public on January 1, 2023.

“The closure will give staff time to prepare the collections for the construction and remodeling that will take place in the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building,” noted Roberta Gebhardt, Research Center program manager. The plan



Careful packing and storage of art and artifacts are part of the Montana Historical Society staff’s efforts to prepare for The Big Move into the Montana Heritage Center in 2023.

calls for reopening in December 2024, but Gebhardt added that they’ll reopen as soon as possible after the remodeling is complete.

During the closure, limited remote research services will be available, as will online resources, including historic newspapers on MontanaNewspapers.org and chroniclingamerica.loc.gov. The Montana Memory Project also will display digitized collections.

However, any research using original, non-digital archives or library collections will not be possible.

“We appreciate the patience of staff and the public while we go through these growing pains,” said MHS Director Molly Kruckenberg. “These are exciting times, and the end result will be a new jewel for the Treasure State.” ★

Year-End Campaign (cont. from p. 2)



grateful to our Montana history community.”

Sullivan noted that MHS mem-

bers, donors, volunteers, and visitors make it possible to preserve Montana’s history, tells its stories, and inspire exploration for people of all ages and

backgrounds.

“We’re proud to serve you,” she added. ★

Kohl Promoted to O&I Program Manager

Martha Kohl is the new Outreach and Interpretation Program manager.

She took the helm after Kirby Lambert retired in 2021, but Kohl has been with the Montana Historical Society long before that.

After earning her master's degree in history from Washington University in St. Louis, Kohl worked at the Missouri Historical Society for seven years, ultimately as the editor of the quarterly magazine *Gateway Heritage*. She then followed Lewis and Clark upriver to Helena to become editor of the Montana Historical Society Press, where she published six to eight books a year.

In 2003, Kohl left the press to work as a historian for the National Register Sign Program, which later became part of the Outreach and Interpretation Program. In addition to writing interpretive signs, she served as project manager and lead historian for *Montana: Stories of the Land*, the Society's middle school history textbook, published in 2008. After publi-

cation of the textbook, she and Program Specialist Debra Mitchell became the Society's primary contact for teachers, producing numerous lesson plans and educator workshops. Kohl also edits the newsletter *Teaching Montana History* and is working on a fourth-grade textbook and curriculum titled *Montana: A History of Our Home*, which will be published in May 2022.

Kohl has authored several articles for *Montana The Magazine of Western History* and the book *I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings*, published by the Montana Historical Society Press in 2011. She is the editor of *Beyond Schoolmarm and Madams: Montana Women's Lives* (also published by MHS Press), a book that grew out of the yearlong women's suffrage centennial project she led in 2014; that project also resulted in creation of the website MontanaWomensHistory.org. A few years later, she spearheaded the Montana Historical Society's commemoration of World War I.



"Retired Program Manager Kirby Lambert left the Outreach and Interpretation Program in great shape—and the program's staff members are as good as they come: smart, dedicated, and committed to sharing the history of Montana. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to continue working with everyone to advance the Society's mission," Kohl said. 🌟

SHPO to Offer Scholarship through the University of Montana

Graduate students enrolled in the University of Montana's anthropology program are encouraged to apply for the Archaeology Research in Montana (ARM) Fellowship.

The fellowship is through the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The ARM Fellowship offers successful applicants \$3,000 to use SHPO's online cultural records and GIS files as the basis of a dissertation, master's thesis, or independent study. The fellowship is tied to coursework, and full payment requires the fellow to earn a minimum 3.0 grade point average. Fellows will file their completed

work with SHPO and must publicly present their final project or submit it for publishing.

State Archaeologist Jessica Bush is SHPO's liaison with the university.

"SHPO has long partnered with University of Montana students to digitize our collection of cultural resource documents," Bush said. "With that process completed in 2020, we have more than 38,000 digitized reports documenting more than six million surveyed acres."

Until recently, much of the information contained in these reports has been difficult to access.

Coupling the digitized reports with GIS mapping, and using new GIS environmental datasets, researchers will have an easier time synthesizing information and advancing what we know about human activity in Montana going back thousands of years.

SHPO is grateful to its donors for providing funding for this new program. 🌟



New Employees

Dan Karalus

Dan Karalus recently joined the Montana Historical Society's Research Center as the National Digital Newspaper Program project coordinator.



He brings several years of government and nonprofit museum experience to the position, most recently working for the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education in the Montana University System, and before that, as a small museum director in both eastern Montana and northern Minnesota.

Karalus has a bachelor's degree in Russian studies from Gustavus Adolphus College, a master's degree in history from the University of Idaho, and a doctorate in history from Northern Arizona University.

He is excited to get back into the history field after a short time away and is looking forward to working with the newspaper collections and the amazing Research Center team at MHS.

"I love to find out all the little stories that make up a place," he said. "I'm always finding something new about a building or a street just walking around town, and I'm already finding some cool things I didn't know about in the collections."

When not exploring the stories at MHS, Karalus and his family are exploring the trails, mountains, and soccer fields around Helena and the rest of the state.

Laura Marsh

A love of Andean archaeology paired with a passion for education provided an unusual career path that led Laura Marsh to Montana's

State Historic Preservation Office's doorstep.

Marsh is the new SHPO compliance officer, who came to the job after a stint as a field instructor for the Helena National Forest and Montana Discovery Foundation's Youth Forest Monitoring Program, as well as doing fieldwork as an archaeologist for the forest.

Her journey began with degrees in archaeology and anthropology from Stanford University, where she wrote her theses on petrographic ceramic analysis at Chavín de Huántar, an archaeological site in Peru. She taught archaeology courses and completed an internship as an assistant teacher of English as a Second Language to recently immigrated students at a public high school, while honing her Spanish fluency and learning basic skills in Quechua, an indigenous language of the Peruvian Andes.

Marsh moved to Peru to continue her ceramic analysis efforts, and also interned with the Peruvian Ministry of Culture in Lima, teaching children about cultural heritage through hands-on experience at an archaeological site. She then taught archaeology at Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and eventually landed a position as director of the Language Department at Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University. She also taught education and sustainable tourism courses, and directed scholarship programs for language, leadership, and multicultural education.

The pandemic prompted her return to the United States, where she continued working virtually with her employers in Peru while also focusing on her martial arts career, before working for the



Forest Service.

"I am so excited to join the team at SHPO and enjoy the opportunity to review projects from different parts of the state regarding interesting historic and archaeological sites of all types," Marsh said. "I am passionate about preserving evidence and knowledge of past ways of life and sharing this with others to inform our current and future paths as a society."

Claudia Bickel

Claudia Bickel is the new—and first—development coordinator at the Montana Historical Society and is thrilled to join the fundraising efforts already under way.



She has lived in Montana for fifteen years and feels fortunate to have landed here. She was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut, and lived in Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., and most recently, Toronto, Ontario, where she spent twenty years before embarking on an adventure that led her first to Boulder, Montana, and finally to Helena.

Bickel has held a variety of jobs including technical writer, indexer of full-text databases, baker (three years at Park Avenue Bakery), and American Sign Language instructor. Most recently, Bickel worked for nine years fundraising at Carroll College. Her primary focus was prospect development and management, but she also worked in depth with the college's donor and alumni database, and spent her last year writing and managing grants.

In joining MHS she is excited to become a part of the great work of preserving and celebrating Montana's history. She has always

New Employees (cont. on p. 6)

Montana Constitution Turns 50!

The Montana Historical Society will join the Constitutional Convention Celebration Committee as a cosponsor of “We the People: The Making of a Constitution.”

The two-day celebration recognizing the fiftieth anniversary of the 1972 Constitution will be held at the Capitol and the Montana Historical Society in Helena on June 15–16, 2022. Speakers will include former delegates and Constitutional Convention staff members, as well as legal scholars, journalists, and historians.

The Montana Historical Society also plans to dedicate its Thursday programs in May to the 1972 Constitution. Among other topics, speakers will address the role of women in writing and passing the 1972 Constitution, how the new constitution changed the legislative branch, and what it means that the constitution includes a commitment to recognize and preserve “the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians.” ★

New Employees (cont. from p. 5)

loved coming to the museum and reading the newsletters, and has often found missing pieces of a research puzzle through the digitized Montana newspapers.

“I enjoy working in the field of philanthropy since it provides an opportunity to support and share something I’m passionate about, and to witness dreams taking shape,” Bickel said. “I look forward to participating in that process at MHS.”

Bickel’s favorite pastimes are trail running, cycling, hiking, and reading. ★

Three Montana Sites Nominated to Historic Register

A bank in Billings, a block in Malta, and a flight strip west of Dell are the newest nominations for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Montana National Bank

The Montana National Bank at the intersection of Broadway and Second Avenue North in downtown Billings is one of the city’s most recognized buildings.

The original Neoclassical Revival portion of the building was constructed in 1918 and designed by Omaha-based architect George B. Prinz. The building functioned as a financial center for nearly sixty years and played a key role in the growth of commerce and culture in the city.

“It’s an interesting melding of classical and modern elements,” said John Boughton, National Register coordinator at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. “Yet the bank building easily continues to convey its historic and architectural significance.”

The Montana National Bank organized in 1912 and initially catered to cattle and sheep ranchers.

Big Sky Economic Development currently is renovating the bank’s interior. Boughton noted that despite some recent renovations that the lofty ceiling and perfect lighting still make for a grand entrance.

Edwards and McLellan Block

Northeast of Billings along the Hi-Line, the Edwards and McLellan Block in Malta consists of two commercial brick buildings constructed by Lee Edwards and William McLellan in 1910. Family members owned the buildings until 1975, and while the business no longer is called Edwards & McLellan, the building operates today much as it did historically.

“The interior arrangement consisted of individual office space confined to the upper floor, with the lower story dedicated to the operation of the mercantile,” Boughton said. “Through the years, upper-story office space was rented to dentists, engineering and surveying companies, the Moore Telephone Company, investment firms, and attorneys. A similar strategy exists today, though instead of individual offices occu-

pying the upper story, the rooms have been converted to lodging, with nearly all retaining their historic space and dimensions.”

Dell Flight Strip

Finally, in the southwest corner of Montana, on a flat stretch of land west of Dell, is a 1943 flight strip. Constructed under the direction of the Montana Highway Department, the Dell Flight Strip dates to the United States’ entry into World War II.

At that time, the U.S. Army Air Force established satellite airfields in western states, as well as intermediate landing strips for emergencies while B-17 bomber crews were training. The “Flying Fortresses” required a minimum of 4,400 feet for takeoffs and landings.

The Dell Flight Strip nomination involves sixteen features, including a fifty-one-foot-tall revolving airport beacon, an electrical shed, hangars, tie-downs, a jet fuel station, and a 1930s-era “privy” complete with a crescent moon on the front and back gables. The runway is about 7,000 feet long by 75 feet wide. ★

Pendleton Wool Comes to MHS Store

The MHS Museum Store is now carrying Pendleton products.

Pendleton Woolen Mills is a family-owned company founded in 1863. It produces fine-quality woolen goods in its two mills in the Pacific Northwest, as well as a variety of gifts, stationery, and accessories using its popular blanket designs.

MHS staff has selected items that are sure to appeal to museum visitors and members alike. Choose from a selection of fine wool throws, pillows, tote bags, and zippered bags. MHS also stocks Pendleton gift items including ceramic mugs, birchwood serving trays, roll-up camping games, playing cards, blank journals, and boxed notecards.

The store even sells a soft cotton baby blanket and hat set, which is the perfect gift for new parents.

Be sure to stop in today to see the assortment of Pendleton items! ☼



Calling All Members

If you're like us, you are curious about your new Heritage Center building. We encourage you to go to the website (montanamuseum.org) and watch what is happening in real time. From the main page at montanamuseum.org, scroll down to "Engage," and click on

"Construction Livestream."

If you have any questions, call Jodel Fohn at (406) 444-2890 and she'll be delighted to help you find the camera.

Your membership supports the Montana Historical Society. Now is a great time to give your friends

and family a gift membership so they can share in the excitement and membership benefits. You can either create a gift membership on our website (mhs.mt.gov/membership) or call Fohn at (406) 444-2890. ☼



About Us

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Museum Program Manager Jennifer Bottomly-o'looney shares part of the museum's collection with members of Leadership Montana, who visited MHS in March.